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SUBJECT: CODEL KOLBE THANKS ANSIP FOR SUPPORT IN IRAQ AND
AFGANISTAN

¶1. (U) Summary. During a meeting in Tallinn on August 24, a congressional delegation led by House Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Chairman James Kolbe(R-AZ) thanked Prime Minister Andrus Ansip for Estonia's support for the Global War on Terror. PM Ansip said Estonian troops will continue to serve in Iraq. PM Ansip and the Congressmen also discussed energy issues, Russia, and the Visa Waiver Program. The delegation, which included Representatives Frederick Upton (R-MI), Brian Baird (D-WA), and Alexander Crenshaw (R-FL) also attended an American Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours event. End Summary.

War on Terror

¶2. (SBU) Chairman Kolbe began the meeting with PM Ansip by thanking Estonia for its commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan. PM Ansip, who has himself visited Iraq, noted that Estonia feels both an obligation and a national interest to serve in Iraq and will continue to do so. He stated that Estonian soldiers consider it the highlight of their military careers to serve in Iraq alongside American troops.

Energy

¶3. (SBU) In response to an inquiry from Congressman Kolbe, PM Ansip explained that Estonia is not as dependent on unreliable Russian energy supplies as are some other countries in the region. Estonia has the capability to produce 100% of its electricity from locally-mined oil shale. In fact, Estonia currently exports electricity to Latvia, Lithuania, and soon to Finland via a new underwater cable. While Estonia does import some natural gas from Russia, this is used to meet only about 10% of Estonia's heating requirements. PM Ansip emphasized that Estonia is in no way dependent on Russian gas. Despite Estonia's fortuitous oil shale reserves, PM Ansip confided that oil shale as an energy source may encounter big problems under the Kyoto Protocol and EU environmental regulations. The oil shale industry faces an uncertain future due to the carbon dioxide emission regulations that will be in full force after 2012. PM Ansip expressed Estonia's desire to ultimately become part of an integrated Nordic and Western European power grid.

Russia

¶4. (SBU) PM Ansip explained to the Congressmen that deep problems exist in the relationship between Estonia and Russia. For example, PM Ansip noted, the border agreement between Russian and Estonia remains unresolved. According to PM Ansip, the biggest issue currently between the countries, however, is cooperation at the border, where commercial trucks are currently facing lengthy border crossing delays as the Russians thoroughly search each vehicle. PM Ansip did not know the reason the Russians had adopted this approach or if it was a deliberate attempt to impede trade. He did note that since Estonia's accession to the EU in 1994, trade volume with Russia has actually increased. Further, Estonia's accession to NATO

has helped stabilize the relationship between the countries as Estonia now has less reason to be afraid of its northern neighbor.

Visa Waiver Program

¶5. (SBU) PM Ansip expressed his frustration that Estonia is not yet eligible for the Visa Waiver Program due to its visa refusal rate. In response to Chairman Kolbe's statement that tightened visa restrictions are due in part to post-9/11 security concerns, PM Ansip commented that Estonia is part of the solution, not part of the problem; concerns about terrorism should not prejudice Estonia's chances to participate in the Visa Waiver Program. PM Ansip encouraged the Congressmen to support legislation that would help make it easier for new EU member states like Estonia to enter the Program, stating that the country's exclusion is a serious and emotional issue for the Estonian public.

Meeting with Local Business Representatives

¶6. (U) Following the meeting with the PM Ansip, the delegation attended an American Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours event. The delegation immediately engaged with the local business community and was reluctant to leave the event, which the Congressmen deemed very worthwhile.

¶7. (U) Codel Kolbe did not have the opportunity to clear this cable before their departure from Tallinn.

Goldstein